

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1609

LONDON POUCH BELFAST

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT EI

SUBJ: HAUGHEY TRIES FOR A COMEBACK

SUMMARY: OPPOSITION LEADER LYNCH IS DELIGHTED THAT CHARLES HAUGHEY HAS SUFFERED A SETBACK IN BID FOR MORE ACTIVE PARTY ROLE.
END SUMMARY

1. CHARLES HAUGHEY, FIANNA FAIL BACKBENCHER, HAS BEEN MAKING A SPEAKING TOUR THAT IS CLEARLY A BID FOR A FRONT BENCH SEAT. PREVIOUSLY A MINISTER, HAUGHEY FELL FROM POWER AND GRACE DURING 1970 ARMS-TRIAL CRISIS. (HE WAS INVOLVED IN MISAPPROPRIATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR NORTHERN CATHOLIC EXTREMISTS.) SINCE THEN, HE HAS KEPT QUIET AND WORKED HARD ON BACK BENCHES. NEWSPAPERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY HIM, HOWEVER, SINCE HE IS ONE OF PARTY'S FEW TALENTED DEPUTIES. CURRENT FIANNA FAIL FRONT BENCH IS SO WEAK THAT JOURNALISTS LOVE TO SPECULATE ON "WHEN CHARLEY WILL RETURN." HIS REPUTATION FOR SHADY REAL-ESTATE DEALS DOES NOT SEEM TO DISCOURAGE HIS FANS. EVENTUALLY, HAUGHEY WOULD CERTAINLY LIKE TO BE PARTY LEADER.

2. HAUGHEY'S CAMPAIGN HAS RUN INTO ONE IMPORTANT SNAG, HOWEVER. IN KERRY, HE MADE A CLEVER, WELL-PUBLICIZED DEFENSE OF REPUBLICAN
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MYTHOLOGY. IT UNDOUBTEDLY APPEALED TO MANY TRADITIONAL FIANNA FAIL

SUPPORTERS, AS IT WAS INTENDED TO DO. MINISTER CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN, HOWEVER, PROMPTLY MADE A SCALDING PUBLIC REPLY. WHEN HAUGHEY DELIVERED A REBUTTAL, O'BRIEN CHALLENGED HIM TO A TELEVISED DEBATE, NOTING THAT HE HAD ISSUED THE SAME CHALLENGE FIVER YEARS EARLIER. ON THAT OCCASION, HAUGHEY HAD DECLINED BECAUSE HE WAS A GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND HIS CHALLENGER AN UPSTART. O'BRIEN SUGGESTED THAT HAUGHEY WAS OBLIGED TO ACCEPT NOW THAT POSITIONS WERE REVERSED. HAUGHEY NEVERTHELESS DECLINED, SAYING THAT MERITS OF HIS AND O'BRIEN'S ARGUMENTS HAD ALREADY BEEN JUDGED BY THEIR CONSTITUENTS. BOTH ARE ELECTED FROM SAME DISTRICT, AND HAUGHEY WINS FAR MORE VOTES. (OUR OWN GUESS IS THAT O'BRIEN WOULD HAVE HANDILY DEFEATED HAUGHEY IN DEBATE, SINCE THE INCONSISTENCIES OF REPUBLICANISM ARE HARD TO DEFEND AGAINST AN OPPONENT OF O'BRIEN'S TALENTS.)

3. SOURCE CLOSE TO OPPOSITON LEADER JACK LYNCH TELLS US THAT LYNCH IS DELIGHTED BY HAUGHEY'S RETREAT UNDER FIRE FROM CONOR CRUISE-O'BRIEN. LYNCH DISLIKES HAUGHEY AND CONSIDERS HIM A DANGEROUS MAN BOTH FOR THE FIANNA FAIL PARTY AND FOR THE COUNTRY. LYNCH WAS, HOWEVER, UNDER REAL PRESSURE TO GIVE HAUGHEY A PROMOTION AND NEEDED AN EXCUSE NOT TO DO SO. HAUGHEY HAS NOW PROVIDED SUCH AN EXCUSE. SOURCE SAID THAT LYNCH HAD IN FACT "SET HAUGHEY UP" FOR HIS DEFEAT. IF HE GETS A FRONT BENCH JOB AT ALL, SOURCE THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE IN ONE OF MORE INFLUENTIAL SHADOW MINISTRIES.

4. COMMENT: OVER LONG-TERM, HAUGHEY MUST BE CONSIDERED A SERIOUS CHALLENGER FOR LYNCH'S JOB, IF ONLY BECAUSE THE COMPETITION IS SO WEAK. WE CAN ENTIRELY ACCEPT LYNCH'S JUDGMENT THAT HAUGHEY WOULD BE DANGEROUS: NOTHING IS LESS NEEDED NOW THAN REPUBLICAN OPPORTUNISM. LYNCH IS PRESUMABLY CORRECT ALSO IN BELIEVEING THAT HAUGHEY HAS BEEN HURT BY HIS REFUSAL TO DEBATE O'BRIEN. ONE CANNOT PREDICT HOW THIS WILL WORK OUT, HOWEVER, O'BRIEN IS DISLIKED BY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT THERE ADVANTAGES IN BEING ATTACKED BY HIM.

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